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Nature of Interactions during Teacher-Student Writing Conferences, Revisiting the Potential Effects of Self-Efficacy Beliefs*

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Abstract

Problem Statement: Within Language Arts instruction the use of teacher-student writing conferences is accepted as an effective strategy for teaching writing. The writing conference allows for an individual one-on-one teacher-student conversation about the students' writing or writing process and provides the student an audience in terms of revising or sharing purposes (McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001; Newkirk, 1989; Sperling, 1991). Although there is more than one way to label writing conferences, their process and purpose is consistently defined. Teacher-student writing conferences have purpose, follow predictable structure, and put students in a position of being partners in collaboration (Anderson, 2000). Several studies purport that writing conferences make students better writers (Bell, 2002; Eickholdt, 2004; Haneda, 2000; Hewett, 2006; Koshik, 2002; Martone, 1992; Steward, 1991; Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis,1996), help them learn better and increase their achievement (Corden, 2007; Edgington, 2004; Flynn & King, 1993; King, 1993; Mabrito, 2006; Mitchell, 2004) and improve their habits and attitudes toward learning, independence, and authority (Martinez, 2001; McIver & Wolf, 1999; Young & Miller, 2004). Bandura (1989) introduced the concept of self-efficacy and argued its effects on motivation and school success. Self-efficacy is developed from the social cognitive theory suggesting that beliefs about self-efficacy can be changed or increased with the effects of personal and

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environmental factors (Schunk, 2003). Self-efficacy is "an individual's judgments of his or her capabilities to perform given actions" (Schunk, 1991, p. 207). Even though plenty of studies investigate the connection between the writing conferences and students' writing skills, research on the relationships between writing conferences and self-efficacy has been ignored. The few studies that do relate writing conferences to self-efficacy tend to mention it as a desire to write more and share their writing proudly (Clippard, 1998) as well as the individual writer's confidence (Clippard, 1998; Tobin, 1998). These studies claimed that writing conferences had a positive impact on students' perceived self-efficacy beliefs toward writing, yet none of the research studies mentioned the features of interaction between the teacher and the student that might affect their perceptions of self-efficacy. Overall, it is clear that more work needs to be done on how students (with high self-efficacy vs. low self-efficacy) and teachers behave during teacher-student writing conferences to determine, and examine whether students' level of perceived self-efficacy toward writing affects the nature of their scheduled teacher-student writing conferences. The intend of this qualitative research design with multiple case studies is to investigate the nature of the interaction during scheduled teacher-student writing conferences and explore relationship between students' level of perceived self-efficacy beliefs and their participation style during writing conferences.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study was two-fold, first, the nature of teacher-student writing conferences were examined to determine if they were balanced, student-centered, or teacher-centered. Second, whether students' levels of perceived self-efficacy could inform the nature of their writing conferences were determined. The quality of teacher-student writing conferences are not easily determined, so this study aimed to highlight the common patterns that occurred during the conferences with students who had low and high levels of perceived self-efficacy toward writing.

Methods: A qualitative study design with multiple case studies was used to observe and analyze scheduled teacher-student writing conferences over a period of 10 weeks. The participants of the study were fifth-graders from a public primary school in the Southeastern United States. Data were collected using the Writing Self-Efficacy Scale (Pajares, Miller, & Johnson, 1999) as adapted from Shell, Murphy, & Bruning (1989), as well as audio and video-taped teacher-student writing conferences, audio-taped interviews with the teacher and students, and field observations. Collected evidence was described and interpreted using qualitative methods.

Results: None of the scheduled teacher-student writing conferences were coded as completely teacher-centered. The classroom teacher was good at conducting conferences having balanced and student-centered features. Also, nature of writing conferences changed among students with

different self-efficacy levels in terms of focus, ownership, conference agenda, turn taking, frequency of talk, numbers and functions of the questions asked, numbers of praise statements provided by the teacher, and amount of outside interruptions occurred during conferences.

Discussion and Conclusion: The analyses of teacher-student writing conferences yielded that conference interaction changed from student to student. While the teacher was successful at conducting student-centered writing conferences in many aspects of the conferences still there were parts she was ineffective on making her students more active participants. The study argues the help of using rubrics to analyze the conference interaction and provides suggestions for practitioners and researchers to better conduct and investigate teacher-student writing conferences.

Keywords: Teacher-student writing conferences, self-efficacy beliefs, writing education, primary school students

Within Language Arts instruction, the use of teacher-student writing conferences for problem students, have been accepted as effective strategies for teaching writing where the writer can share his/her writing with an audience in terms of revising or sharing purposes (Anderson, 2000; Bell, 2002; Hewett, 2006; Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis, 1996). Teacher-student writing conferences are individual, one-on-one teacher-student conversations about the students' writing or writing process. Murray (1985) called these conversations "professional discussion between writers" on what works and what does not work in students' writings (p. 140). Over the decades, writing conferences have been investigated under different names reflecting their multiple functions including: response sessions (Hansen, 1987); assisted performance (Vygotsky, 1978); face-to-face interaction (Harris, 1986); one-to-one teaching (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983;); one-to-one interaction (North, 1995; Sperling, 1991); conversation about the student's paper (Anderson, 2000); private communication/conversations (Sperling, 1991); interactive dialogues (Wong, Butler, Ficzere, and Kuperis, 1997); dialectic encounter (Newkirk, 1989); and meaningful contact (Lerner, 2005).

Although there is more than one way to label writing conferences, their process and purpose is consistently defined by researchers. For example, all of them have a purpose, follow predictable structure, and put students in the position of being partners for collaboration (Anderson, 2000). During the writing conferences, teachers' roles are helping children to expand their thinking by asking questions, making comments, or introducing different ideas that encourage and force students to think more and create diverse ideas (Keebler, 1995).

The value of writing conferences has been highlighted as providing an avenue that allows the writer an audience for face-to-face discussion about their written work. Several studies purport that writing conferences make students better writers (Bell, 2002; Eickholdt, 2004; Haneda, 2000; Hewett, 2006; Koshik, 2002; Martone, 1992; Steward, 1991; and Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis,1996), help them learn better

and increase their achievement (Corden, 2007; Edgington, 2004; Flynn & King, 1993; King, 1993; Mabrito, 2006; Mitchell, 2004) and improve their habits and attitudes toward learning, independence, and authority (Martinez, 2001; McIver & Wolf, 1999; Young & Miller, 2004).

Self-efficacy is developed from the social cognitive theory suggesting that beliefs about self-efficacy can be changed or increased with the effects of personal and environmental factors (Schunk, 2003). Bandura (1989) introduced the concept of self-efficacy and argued its effects on motivation and school success. Self-efficacy is "an individual's judgments of his or her capabilities to perform given actions" (Schunk, 1991, p. 207). It is a belief that someone has power to reach a certain goal (Ormrod, 2003). Self-efficacy is different from self-concept and self-esteem. Comparing to self-efficacy beliefs, self-concept judgments are more general, stable and enduring (Hudges, Galbraith, & White, 2011) and self-esteem is related to self-worth (McTigue & Liew, 2011) and refers to emotional reactions to previous achievements (Troia, Shankland, & Wolbers (2012).

Determining and increasing students level of self-efficacy is essential because students with high self-efficacy work hard (Bandura, 1993; Pajares, 2003; Walker, 2003), persist (Bandura, 1993; Bottomley, Henk, & Melnick, 1998; Liew, McTigue, Barrois, & Hughes, 2008; Ormrod, 2003; Schunk, 2003; Walker, 2003), seek help when completing challenging tasks (McTigue, Liew, & Wasburn, 2009; Walker, 2003), feel less apprehensive when faced with writing problems (Bandura, 1993; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Valiante, 1997), approach difficult tasks as challenges instead of ignoring or avoiding them to save face (Bandura, 1989), set more challenging goals, believe that they will achieve their goals, take risks, engage in related activities, and are confident with the awareness of their potential (Bandura, 1993). Students with low self-efficacy, on the other hand, shy away from difficult tasks, have low aspirations, have weak commitment to the goals they choose to pursue, dwell on their personal deficiencies, give up quickly, and fall easy victim to stress and depression (Bandura, 1993; Vrugt, Oort, & Waardenburg, 2009). Additionally they believe that no matter what they do, they cannot learn or improve their skills (Bottomley, Henk, & Melnick, 1998) and they are reluctant to seek help (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Nelson & Ketelhut, 2008).

The few studies that do relate writing conferences to self-efficacy tend to mention it as desire to write more and share their writing proudly (Clippard, 1998), positive judgments (Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis, 1996), and confidence (Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis, 1996; Clippard, 1998; Tobin, 1998).

The intend of this qualitative research design with multiple case studies is to investigate the nature of the interaction during scheduled teacher-student writing conferences and explore relationship between students' level of perceived self-efficacy beliefs and their participation style during writing conferences. Therefore, the research questions of this study are:

1.What is the nature of scheduled teacher-student conferences between a teacher and four fifth-grade students?

2.Can teacher-student writing conferences be informed by students' perceived self-efficacy?

Method

Participants

Initially, a convenience sampling method was chosen to select the teacher and her students for the study. However, one female primary school teacher was purposefully chosen because of her willingness to be a study participant and her interest in improving her teaching strategies. Her classroom was identified as having met all the criteria cited by Henk, Marinak, & Moore (2003) for refining and validating writing instruction. By focusing on purposive sampling and case studies, the researcher believed that this group of participants would provide the variability necessary for examining the study questions. The primary school teacher chosen had followed current research in language arts education, had attended several conferences on the topic, had finished a Summer Invitational Institute on the National Writing Project prior to this study, and had been conferring with her fifth graders during the prior fourth grade year.

The participants for this study were from a public primary school in the Southeastern United States and included one female primary school teacher that instructed Language Arts in elementary grades three to five and was also enrolled in a graduate degree program in Reading and Language Arts. The students that were selected from the study teacher's fifth grade classroom totaled 22 (11 male and 11 female) and averaged an age of 10.5 years old. The classroom diversity was two African-American, two Asian-American, two Mexican-American, and the remaining 18 were European-American. No students were reported to have learning disabilities. The selection of the four case study students was based on their scores from an administered Writing Self-Efficacy Scale. As a result, two groups of students those with higher self-efficacy versus those with lower self-efficacy were determined. In order to control for gender effect, one male and one female student were placed in each group.

Measures

The Writing-Self-Efficacy Scale that was used in this research was a survey with nine items designed to measure students' confidence when judging their composition, grammar, usage, and mechanical skills appropriate to academic level. The items in the survey asked students how confident they were that they could perform specific writing skills on a scale from 0 (no chance) to 100 (completely certain). Each item of the scale was read by the researcher to prevent any misreading or misunderstanding of the items.

The Writing Self-Efficacy Scale: The Writing Self-Efficacy Scale was adapted from Pajares, Miller, & Johnson (1999) who originally used the scale created by Shell, Murphy, & Bruning (1989). Shell, Murphy, & Bruning (1989) created a writing self-efficacy scale with eight items, each measuring students' confidence on communicating their ideas effectively in their writing. Reliability of these eight items, which were calculated with Cronbach's alpha, was .95.

Later, Shell, Colvin, and Bruning (1995) used the same scale with 364 fourth, seventh, and tenth-grade students. The coefficient alpha reliability estimate for the self-efficacy scale for writing skill was .76 . Finally, four years later, Pajares, Miller, & Johnson (1999) used the same scale with 363 third, fourth, and fifth-grade students with a scale from zero (no chance) to 100 (completely certain). The authors added one item into the original survey. They obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .85.

Interviews: After the Self-Efficacy Scale was implemented, the students were asked nine open-ended questions encouraging them to reflect whether they enjoy writing, their strengths and weaknesses in writing and how they define and evaluate writing conferences.

Rubric for Categorizing and Determining the Nature of Writing Conferences: Analysis of each teacher-student writing conference interaction was guided by use of the rubric organized into eight categories: focus, conference agenda, ownership/building on student's strengths, reflected questions, encouraged turn taking, frequency of talk, number of praise statements, and amount of interruptions. Rubric categories were further divided into three sections; teacher-centered, balanced, and finally student-centered. Conference interactions were assigned a score of 1, 2, or 3 points for each of the eight categories. With 1 point being considered as a teacher-centered conference, 2 points a balanced conference, and 3 points a student-centered conference.

Observations: The research setting was visited by the researcher five times a week for 75 minutes daily. The scheduled writing conferences were set up and audio-video recorded in the natural setting as a part of the curriculum. The purpose of observation was relayed to students but they were not informed about how these conferences would be analyzed. Neither the teacher nor the students knew who case study students were and what observations focused on during conferences. The conference talk was transcribed and analyzed in order to determine the nature --- balanced, student-centered, or teacher-centered --- of individual teacher-student writing conferences.

Results

Data obtained through the writing self-efficacy scale, student interviews, and writing conference observations were thoroughly analyzed and synthesized. In order for the researcher to get a complete and unbiased understanding and be sure the researcher reflected what was going on in the classrooms, collected data and its analyses were shared by the classroom teachers -- member checking -- to have data triangulation.

In analyzing the nature of writing conferences, a total of 32 writing conferences were repeatedly reviewed, coded and analyzed separately by the researcher and the second reader/coder who was experienced in teaching writing and not affiliated with the data collection. The nature of scheduled teacher-student writing conferences were analyzed based on the rubric with eight categories: focus, conference agenda, ownership, reflected questions, turn taking, frequency of talk, number of received praise comments and amount of interruption. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Intraclass Correlation Coefficients (ICC) and the initial inter-rater agreement was .93. After four follow-up rater-reliability meetings, with analyses of each case, the two raters reached 100% agreement.

In terms of *focus*, it was encouraging to see that 72% of the conferences were coded as student-centered. Two out of thirty-two conferences were coded as balanced, while 16% of the conferences were coded as teacher-centered since the teacher mentioned more than three issues that needed to be fixed.

In terms of determining the *conference agenda,* each turns were coded individually. If the teacher leaded the conversation that turn was coded as teacher-centered and if the student leaded the turn that turn was coded as student-centered. Overall, the classroom teacher was good at allowing students to determine the conference agenda and shift topics freely. Thus, in only one conference the teacher kept the power and control of the topics to be discussed. In twelve conferences (38%) both teacher and student leaded the discussion and answered the inquiries. These conferences were coded as balanced conferences. Again, it was promising to see that 59% of the conferences were coded as student-centered where the teacher gave the students opportunities to determine and lead the conference discussion.

The third category was *ownership/building on student's strengths* paid attention to whether the suggestions for improvement came from the teacher or the student. In contrast to the first two categories, for this category it was found that the teacher kept the control in terms of providing suggestions and recommendations to improve the quality of the written text. Thus, 34% of the conferences were coded as teacher-centered. In 44% of the conferences both the teacher and the students provided similar numbers of recommendations that leaded these conferences to be coded as balanced. In only one conference, the student provided more suggestions than the teacher did and it was the only conference coded as student-centered.

The fourth category, *reflected questions* investigated total numbers and functions of questions asked in each conference. If the teacher asked more than 2/3 of the questions the conference was coded as teacher-centered. If both parties produced almost equal numbers of questions the conference was coded as balanced. When the student produced most of the questions the conference was coded as student-centered. The analyses of the conference interaction showed that the teacher outnumbered students with her numerous questions. She asked total of 464 questions while four students altogether asked total of 76 questions. Thus, only two

conferences were coded as student-centered and another two conferences were coded as balanced while the remaining 28 conferences were coded as teacher-centered.

Encouraged turn taking was the fifth category and investigated which partner used most of the turns in the conference discussion. Only 9% of the conferences were coded as teacher-centered and the remaining 91% of the conferences were balanced where both the teacher and the student took almost equal numbers of turns which allowed students to be also involved in the conversation about his/her text.

Frequency of talk was the sixth category and similar to turn taking it also counted utterances of each party. It was surprising to see that even though in the majority of the conferences both parties had almost equal numbers of turns, when it comes to the total numbers of words produced by both parties, it has seen that the teacher outnumbered the students in 62% of the conferences. In 16% of the conferences both the teacher and the student talked almost equally during the discussion and they exchanged roles as senders and receivers of the messages. Thus, these conferences coded as balanced. In 22% of the conferences, the teacher gave opportunities to the students to produce more than 50% of the talk and acted as a sender of the messages during the conference dialogue and these conferences were coded as student-centered.

Number of praise comments received was the seventh category and investigated the amount and the nature of praise statements. The conferences where the majority of the general praise statements were used to show active listening were coded as teacher-centered. The conferences where the teacher still used general praise statements for highlighting the quality of the student's text were coded as balanced. Finally, the conferences where the teacher provided specific praise statements were coded as student-centered writing conferences. The percentage of teacher-centered writing conferences was 19% and it was 37% for balanced and 25% for the student-centered conferences.

The last category was *amount of interruption occurred.* The total time of interruption was calculated in each conference and if that time took more than 15% of the total conference time that conference was coded as teacher-centered. When the interruption time was less than 15% of the total conference time, that conference was coded as balanced because the teacher returned to the discussion as soon as she could. The conferences where there was no interruption occurred were coded as student-centered since the teacher did not allowed others to interrupt their conversation and gave the message that conferring was a serious act. Even though, the teacher warned students several times not to interrupt still 22% of the conferences were interrupted and the total time for the interruptions took longer than 15% of the total conference time. The length of interruptions were less than 15% in 44% of the conferences that lead these conferences to be coded as balanced and 34% of the conferences were coded as student-centered since there was no interruptions occurred. Below, the nature of interactions during teacher-student writing conferences with four case study students are presented.

Table 1.

Overview of the Conferences with Student 1 (Male) Across the Indicators

Conferences:	C. 1	C. 2	C. 3	C. 4	C. 5	C. 6	C. 7
Focus	3	3	N/A	2	1	3	3
Agenda	3	3	3	1	3	3	3
Ownership/Strengths	2	2	N/A	1	2	1	N/A
Reflected Questions	1	1	1	3	1	1	1
Turn taking	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Frequency of talk	1	3	3	2	1	1	3
Praises	1	1	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	2
Interruption	1	2	3	1	3	2	3

1= Teacher-centered 2= Balanced 3= Student-centered

Table 2.

Overview of the Conferences with Student 2 (Female) Across the Indicators

Conferences:	C. 1	C. 2	C. 3	C. 4	C. 5	C. 6	C. 7
Focus	3	3	3	3	3	1	3
Agenda	3	3	3	3	2	2	3
Ownership/Strengths	2	N/A	2	1	1	1	2
Reflected Questions	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Turn taking	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Frequency of talk	1	2	3	3	3	1	2
Praises	3	3	3	2	2	3	3
Interruption	2	3	2	2	3	2	3

1= Teacher-centered 2= Balanced 3= Student-centered

Table 3.

Overview of the Conferences with Student 3 (Male) Across the Indicators

Conferences:	C. 1	C. 2	C. 3	C. 4	C. 5	C. 6	C. 7	C. 8	C. 9	C. 10
Focus	3	3	3	3	3	1	N/A	3	1	3
Agenda	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Ownership/Strengths	3	1	1	N/A	1	2	N/A	N/A	2	2
Reflected Questions	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Turn taking	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Frequency of talk	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Praises	2	1	2	2	1	3	N/A	2	N/A	1
Interruption	3	1	2	1	1	2	3	3	2	1

1= Teacher-centered 2= Balanced 3= Student-centered

Table 4.

Overview of the Conferences with Student 4 (female) across the Indicators

Conferences	C. 1	C. 2	C. 3	C. 4	C. 5	C. 6	C. 7	C. 8
Focus	3	2	3	3	3	3	1	3
Agenda	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	3
Ownership/Strengths	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2
Reflected Questions	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	3
Turn taking	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Frequency of talk	2	1	2	3	1	1	1	1
Praises	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	N/A
Interruption	2	2	3	3	1	2	2	2

1= Teacher-centered 2= Balanced 3= Student-centered

The analyses of 32 teacher-student writing conferences revealed that the research study teacher was successful at keeping the conferences focused and allowed students to determine the conference agenda. However, there were conferences in which students did not share content from their papers or their writing processes. This led these conferences to be excluded from the analyses in terms of conference agenda, ownership, and praise statements. Even though the classroom teacher did allow students to have almost 50% of turn-taking, she still produced higher number of words and suggestions and/or recommendations for students to implement into their writing which lead to her maintaining the power and control in terms of ownership and frequency of talk. Another surprising finding was seeing that even though the teacher warned students to be quiet and not to interrupt while she was conferring, the teacher had total of 40 interruptions and almost half of these were initiated by her for classroom control, giving directions, and answering her phone.

Another important part of this analysis was to analyze whether teacher-student writing conferences can be informed by students' perceived self-efficacy, the teacher-student writing conferences were thoroughly viewed and transcripts of conference talks were read repeatedly. Students' level of perceived self-efficacy toward writing was measured at the beginning of the study with the Self-Efficacy Survey. Based on the scores gained form that survey, four case study students were selected. In order to highlight the observed behavioral differences in students with higher and lower self-efficacy, the case study students are described.

Student 1 (male) – the Confident Male Student

Student 1 was a highly confident writer. Sharing his writing with the researcher and with others was always easy for him and he even enjoyed the sharing process. Students frequently went to him for suggestions while the classroom teacher was conferring with other students. Besides being a good responder to classmates, student 1 was also a fluent writer who enjoyed conferences and his favorite part was gaining ideas and advice from his teacher.

The duration of writing conferences with student 1 ranged from 53 seconds to 7 minutes and 38 seconds. During seven conferences he wrote texts for diverse genres.

He was first assigned to write a historical fiction which was the focus of the first four conferences. The fifth conference was held after he wrote an expository text regarding his Christmas holiday memories. The last two conferences occurred during the process of writing a persuasive essay.

Student 2 (female) – the Confident Female Student

Student 2 always had lots of ideas and was also a fluent writer. She was also eager to share her writing with others and several times during the study she asked me or the interns to read what she had written. While talking to the researcher, during the interview, she seemed very comfortable and the dialogue with her lasted longer than with any other student in her classroom. The student told that since she had a powerful imagination she was confident in her writing. She also believed she was good at indenting new paragraphs, using strong verbs, juicy color words, and action verbs.

Her favorite part in conferences was where she gained more details for improving her paragraphs. She considered conferencing similar to *having a check-up*. She stated that sometimes she requested meeting with the teacher to discuss her composition even though a writing conference was not scheduled. Throughout the study, she had seven writing conferences.

Student 3 (male) – the Less Confident Male Student

Student 3 stated that he was not a confident writer. He rarely allowed others to read his writing. He was a shy student and never volunteered to read his text to others. Student 3 seemed sad and concerned, did not talk much, and stayed at his desk for most of the time while other students were collaborating on their stories. He seemed uncomfortable sharing his ideas and feelings about writing in the interview. His writing was slow with several long pauses. Even after several weeks following the first recorded teacher-student writing conference, most of his peers had finished composing their stories, yet he continued to lag behind.

During the study, student 3 had ten conferences which ranged from 7 seconds to 10 minutes and 33 seconds depending on the draft stage and the type of conference. Overall looking at his conference interactions it was observed that he had difficulty sticking to a chosen composition topic.

Student 4 (female) – the Less Confident Female Student

Student 4 used most of her writing time for giggling and talking with peers and also exhibited low self-efficacy toward writing. Once she was focused on her writing she was fluent, however, it was not always easy for her to be focused. Never volunteering to read her text to others and when approached she did her best to avoid talking about her writing. In the interview, Student 4 stated that her writing was not good because she did not know how to start or end a story. She described conferences as where the teacher talks to them, reads some part of their stories, tells what needs to be improved, what to add, and, based on the conference, what the student needs to fix in their paper. During the study, student 4 had eight writing conferences.

According to the literature on the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993; Liew, McTigue, Barrois, & Hughes, 2008; McTigue, Liew, & Wasburn, 2009; Pajares & Valiante, 1997; Schunk, 2003; Walker, 2003), the researcher supposed that students will experience diverse conferences related to their confidence level. It was assumed that students with higher self-efficacy would be more active in determining the conference agenda thus keeping authority and ownership. Since they would be actively participating in the conference talk they would have equal turns, similar number of questions asked, and produce as much speech as their teacher. It was also expected that more confident students' conferences would be longer, with less interruptions, and with more praise statements when the teacher focused on only one or two issues in students' writing keeping the conferences more focused.

Interviews and field notes revealed differences between these two groups. For instance; students with higher self-efficacy viewed writing conferences as dialogues not short mini-lessons, enjoyed sharing their writing with the teacher and other students, were persistent and fluent in writing, highlighted content-related concerns to improve the quality of texts, and more importantly saw themselves as good writers. Students with lower self-efficacy, on the other hand, seemed uncomfortable to talk about their writing, frequently had writers block, were resistant to share their writing, showed lower levels of commitment to writing, and highlighted mainly the surface-related concerns to improve the quality of texts. Table 5 summarizes the different patterns that were observed in these two groups of students' writing conferences.

Table 5.

Different Patterns in Conferences of Students with Higher and Lower Self-Efficacy

Students with Higher Self-Efficacy	Students with Lower Self-Efficacy
-Had mainly student-centered conferences	-Had mainly balanced-conferences
-Had longer conferences with less interruption	-Had shorter conferences with more interruptions
-Received more teacher praise	-Received less teacher praise
-Engaged in more social talk	-Engaged in less social talk
-Frequently initiated conference talk	-Seldom initiated conference talk
-Were more active participants during conferences	-Were less active participants during Conferences

When the conference interactions of two groups were compared with each other, as seen in Table 5, it was found that the majority of the assumptions were proved. For instance, each student with lower self-efficacy received positive feedback a total of three times, while the total number of positive feedback statements was twenty-

one for students with higher self-efficacy. Even though these students had longer conferences, they had less number of interruptions while conferring with their teacher. The total number of outside interruptions was sixteen for students with higher self-efficacy and twenty-four for students with lower self-efficacy. Students with higher self-efficacy were willing to confer and frequently initiated the conference talk. In contrast, the students with lower self-efficacy initiated the conferences only twice and on other occasions both of them mentioned that they had writer's block and were not willing to share their writing.

Differences between these students with higher and lower self-efficacy were observed during this study and their behavior was seen to play a role in both how they approached assigned writing tasks and how they interacted with the teacher during scheduled teacher-student writing conferences. Three important observations of students' writing behavior during this research showed that the more confident students worked harder, were not hesitant to seek assistance when needed, and persistently stayed on task until their assigned task was achieved. Consequently, the two confident case study students were first to complete their story assignments. Even though they finished their work much earlier than several other students they were still seen engaging in related writing activities. To summarize, the confident students seemed to be more self-disciplined and when responding to the self-efficacy survey and the interview they reflected positively on their strengths and potential as writers.

In contrast, observations of less confident students showed that they were quick to give up on their task, often blamed themselves for their failure, and appeared to be frustrated when working towards their goal. During the writing process the lower self-efficacy students avoided drafting, revising, and sharing. Throughout the writing process, these students wrote in a linear manner, seemed concerned and nervous, and were reluctant to revise or share their stories. While conferring, they also had difficulty speaking with the teacher about their texts. They also exhibited low aspiration. Not surprisingly, they also showed weaker commitment to their goals. Among the entire class these two students were part of the final four students to complete their writing assignment. In summary, the less confident students appeared to be less committed to accomplishing their goals, were less self-disciplined than more confident students, and responded negatively about their writing abilities in the self-efficacy survey and the interview.

Conclusion and Discussion

In discussing the nature of teacher-student writing conferences it was a goal to understand if writing conferences were balanced, student-centered, or teacher-centered. It was determined that the research study teacher and the students had all forms of conferences; balanced, student-centered, and teacher-centered. Based on characteristics of effective writing conferences identified in the literature (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983; Harris & Silva, 1993; McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001; Murphy, 2000; Straub, 2001; Wilcox, 1997) research observations uncovered several

ways in which the research study teacher's conferencing approach could be characterized as student-centered. Several writing conference strategies she utilized were, for example, she played the role of advocate by creating a conference environment in which both parties shared power and were treated equally (Boynton, 2003; Graves, 1983). A specific table for conducting conferences was designated and the research teacher always sat next to the student, not across from them. She also encouraged students to lead off the conference talk and were also able to speak up at any time allowing the teacher's role to be more of a coach instead of the all-knowing dictator which is discussed in (Boynton, 2003; Graves, 1983; McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001; Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984) as an important conferencing strategy. These led students to more freely explain their texts and/or ideas because the teacher often prompted them with open-ended questions which were also advocated as an effective conferencing approach by Smith (2005). By keeping the conferences concise and focused the teacher allowed students to have multiple conferences over the period of the writing process which concurred with Atwell (1987), Boynton (2003), and Graves (1983). During these conferences the research teacher remained attentive by listening carefully to students' ideas, questions, and responses. Her conscientious behavior encouraged students to be more open and share their topics and concerns which is a sign of a more student-centered conference (Kaufman, 1998).

The research teacher effectively provided students opportunities for turn-taking by using pauses as their cue to generate a response (Graves, 1994). Additionally, she used longer pauses with less confident students for them to formulate a response to unforeseen questions or comments. The students were also given both general and specific praise statements to learn more about their strengths (Wachholz & Etheridge, 1996).

Along all these promising practices, there were times the research study teacher also was less effective and conferred in a more teacher-centered approach. Allowing students to speak frequently aids the teacher in better understanding students' needs and can lead to more effective decisions regarding topics and strategies of instruction for individual students (Murphy, 2000). When attention was paid to the frequency of talk between the teacher and her students, she dominated the conference talk by using a higher number of words.

It is important to communicate the intentions of the text before addressing any of the editing concerns (Oye, 1993; Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989; Wilson-Power, 1999). Throughout the period of observed conferences sometimes the teacher ignored where the student writer was in his/her drafting stage. During one of her earlier conferences, Student 4 unhappily showed her paper all in red ink showing her grammar mistakes pointed out by the teacher. Additionally, the failure to provide a substantial amount of specific praise statements was another drawback in the teacher's conferencing style. This is important because, as highlighted, by Hansen (1987) and Wachholz & Etheridge (1996) the teachers' use of praise statements can bolster a student's confidence and feedback gained from the teacher is a persuasive tool for students to determine their level of perceived self-efficacy (Cho, Schunn, & Charney, 2006; Duijnhouwer, Prins, & Stokking, 2011) and encourage them to

continue working on their goal (McTigue & Liew, 2011). Moreover, by gaining feedback students learn keeping a purpose and audience in their mind while writing their texts (Calkins, 1994; Karsbaek, 2011).

The findings of this research support that students' conference interactions differed according to their level of self-efficacy and these beliefs led them to play different roles as participants while conferring with their teacher (Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003; Mitchell, 1990; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997). Like Takaku and Williams's study (2011), in this present study it was found that there was not a significant difference between male and female students in terms of help seeking behaviors. However, similar to McTigue and Liew (2011) stated, the students with higher level of perceived self-efficacy showed proactive help-seeking behavior. The present study showed that it was not the teacher alone who contributed to the conference but students were also there and the way students behaved during conferences shaped the nature of interaction between two groups of conference participants. Thus, the study highlighted the fact that differences in conferencing patterns might be caused not only because teachers are less patient or have low expectations while working with less achieving students (Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997) but because these students still see the teacher as an authority figure and limit their participation with accepting the teacher suggestions.

While analyzing conference interaction, attention needs to be paid to both parties' input rather than focusing solely to the teacher or to the student. As Murphy (2000) highlighted, "we cannot make sense of an interaction if we only hear one half of the conversation" (p. 89).

Analyzing a conference from multiple perspectives established through the conference rubric allowed the researcher to not over generalize the rules of effective conferencing. For instance, during conference analysis 72% of the writing conferences were coded as focused because one or two writing concerns were mentioned, yet closer attention to overall conference interaction showed that there was in fact limited discussion about the content of the student's paper. The brief mention about the development and motivation behind the students' texts did not lead to the teacher or the student asking content related questions, offering suggestions, or making recommendations. As a result, these interactions although focused in some respect actually failed to allow the student to truly develop ownership and/or determine the conference agenda.

Educators should go beyond the evaluations of teachers and students' responses in terms of assessing the effectiveness of a conference. Students' and teachers' feelings and attitudes toward the writing conferences are, of course, valuable information for the field. Still, while determining the effectiveness of a particular writing conference, researchers should also pay attention to a) what is happening in a conference by considering both parties' input in making and negotiating meaning, b) relationships between what happens in a conference and its effects on the student's

revision activities and attitudes toward writing, and c) the nature of the conference discourse and its effects on students' perceived self-efficacy toward writing.

Recommendations:

This study uncovers several rules of thumb for practitioners to keep in mind when conferring with their students. First, the teacher needs to be patient while conferring with their students. Because providing a quick solution is not necessarily the best way to assist students in developing new skills (Graves, 1994). Second, when conferring teachers can empower students by giving them ownership regarding the development of their writing skills rather than dominating the conversation through frequent questions, explanations, and lectures like they often do during mini-lessons (Anderson, 2000). Third, teachers should provide models for their students to improve their writing and help students better understand the writing process (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). Fourth, while students are judging their capabilities they need to hear positive feedback from their teachers and tutors in order to better realize their strengths and be motivated to write (Karsbaek, 2011). Fifth, since students can misjudge their level of self-efficacy, an appropriate strategy or evaluation instrument should be used to aid in informing students about their potential. Later teachers can utilize this information to further develop their curriculum and writing activities in order to better accommodate each child's needs and feelings. Determining students' level of perceived self-efficacy is important for teachers as self-efficacy belief promotes self-regulated learning and achievement (McTigue & Liew, 2011; Pajares, 2003).

Investigating students' levels of perceived self-efficacy is important for educators. Knowing our students' levels of self-efficacy can provide a head start in better understanding and helping students (Pajares, Miller, & Johnson, 1999). Also important to remember is that students behave parallel to how they feel about their skills (Bandura, 1984, 1993; Pajares & Valiante, 1999). It has been observed that researchers have given significant attention to self-efficacy and how people judge their skills. Less attention though has been paid to how self-efficacy affects learning, especially the relationships between self-efficacy and learning to write. In addition, because little attention has been focused on studies of younger students it is critical for researchers to more exhaustively investigate self-efficacy at these grade levels.

Another recommendation is that this study might be replicated with co-researchers/research partners, so that writing conferences in several classrooms and schools could be recorded simultaneously and then investigated for occurrences of common patterns across teachers and/or students in a larger range of conferences. Additional studies with larger sample sizes may also uncover subtle changes in students' writing skills and lead to statistical testing with more generalizable measures.

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Öğrencinin Yazıları Hakkında Öğretmeniyle Konuşmalarının Niteliğinin ve Öz-Yeterlik Duygusunun Bu Görüşmelerin Doğası Üzerindeki Potansiyel Etkilerinin İncelenmesi

Atıf:

Bayraktar, A. (2013). Nature of Interactions during Teacher-Student Writing Conferences, Revisiting the Potential Effects of Self-Efficacy Beliefs. *Egitim Arastirmalari-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 50, 63-86.

(Özet)

Problem Durumu: Öğrencinin yazıları ve yazma süreci hakkında öğretmeniyle yaptığı görüşmelerin, öğrencinin yazı başarısıyla olan ilişkisini inceleyen çok sayıda çalışma bulunmaktadır ancak bu görüşmelerin öğrencinin öz-yeterlik inancına olan etkileri ihmal edilmiştir. Öz-yeterlik konusuyla ilişkilendirilen çalışmalar, öz-yeterlik duygusu yüksek olan öğrencilerin daha fazla yazmak istediklerini ve yazılarını gururla paylaştıklarını (Clippard, 1998) ve yazı konusunda kendilerine güvendiklerini (Clippard, 1998; Tobin, 1998) bulmuşlardır. Bu çalışmalar öğrencinin öğretmeni ile yüz yüze görüşmelerinin öğrencinin yazı yazmaya yönelik olumlu öz-yeterlik duygusu geliştirmesine etkisi olduğunu savunmuştur. Ancak yapılan araştırmalar öğretmen ve öğrencinin ikili görüşmelerinin yapısını ve aralarındaki diyaloğun öğrencinin olumlu öz-yeterlik duygusuna olabilecek etkilerini incelememiştir. Açıkça görülmektedir ki, öz-yeterlik duygusu yüksek ve düşük olan öğrencilerin ve onların öğretmenleriyle olan etkileşimlerinin yapısı incelenmeli ve öğrencinin sahip olduğu öz-yeterlik duygusunun öğrencinin davranışlarına ve bu görüşmelere katılımına olan potansiyel etkilerinin araştırılması gerekmektedir.

Çalışmanın Amacı: Bu çalışmanın amacı, öğrencinin yazıları hakkında öğretmeniyle birebir yaptığı görüşmelerin özelliklerini incelemektir. Çalışma aynı zamanda öğrencinin yazı yazmaya dair sahip olduğu öz-yeterlik duygusunun bu ikili görüşmelerin doğasını açıklamaya etkisi olup olmadığını da araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Görüşmelerin kalitesinin belirlenmesi ve tartışılması zor olduğundan, araştırmacı öz-yeterlik duygusu yüksek ve düşük olan öğrencilerin ikili görüşmelerinde oluşan karakter davranışları betimlemeye çalışmıştır.

Yöntem: Önceden belirlenmiş öğretmen-öğrenci görüşmelerinin yapısını (öğrenci merkezli mi, öğretmen merkezli mi yoksa ikisine de ortak derecede ağırlık mı verildiği) belirlemek amacıyla 10 hafta süren bu çalışmada birden fazla durum çalışmasının incelenmesi yoluyla nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın katılımcıları Amerika'nın güney doğusunda faaliyet gösteren bir ilköğretim okulunun bir sınıfında okuyan beşinci sınıf öğrencileridir. Araştırmanın verileri Pajares, Miller, & Johnson'ın (1999) Shell, Murphy, & Bruning'den (1989) uyarladıkları Yazı Yazma Öz-Yeterlik Ölçeği, ses ve video kaydı yapılan öğretmen-öğrenci ikili görüşmeleri, ses kaydı yapılan görüşmeler ve araştırmacının alanda

yaptığı gözlem ve tuttuğu notlar yoluyla toplanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler nitel çalışma yöntemiyle kodlanmış ve yorumlanmıştır.

Bulgular: Öz-yeterlik duygusu farklı olan öğrencilerin, öğretmenleriyle olan etkileşimlerinin de yapısı farklılıklar göstermiştir. Nitel veriler öz-yeterlik duygusu yüksek olan öğrencilerin ikili görüşmelerinin öz-yeterlik duyguları düşük olan öğrencilerin görüşmelerinden a) görüşmenin odağı; b) kendi yazı çalışmalarını sahiplenme düzeyleri; c) görüşmenin gündemi; d) söz alma sıklığı; e) konuşma miktarı; f) sorulan sorularının sayıları ve fonksiyonları; g) öğretmen tarafından verilen övgülerin sayısı ve h) görüşmelerinin kesintiye uğramasının sayısı konularında farklılıklar göstermiştir.

Tartışma ve Öneriler: Yapılan analizler, öğretmen-öğrenci görüşmelerinin yapısının öğrenciden öğrenciye farklılaşabileceğini göstermiştir. Sınıf öğretmeni birçok alanda, öğrenci merkezli görüşmeler yapmasına rağmen görüşmelerin önemli bir kısmında kendisi aktif rol üstlenerek öğrencilerini pasif katılımcılar durumunda bırakmıştır. Çalışma bu tür ikili görüşmelerin karmaşık yapılarından ötürü detaylandırılmış puanlama anahtarlarıyla analiz edilmesinin gerekliliğini savunmakta görüşmelerin etkili olabilmesi için eğitimciler ve araştırmacılar için öneriler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Öğretmen-öğrencinin yüz yüze görüşmeleri, öz yeterlilik, yazı eğitimi, ilköğretim öğrencileri